

# HARLEM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS

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## ON SCANDALIZING LITTLE ONES

by Nancy Grenell

**L**AST week two youngsters, ten and eleven years old, confessed to breaking into a dozen Harlem apartments. They took jewelry, because it was pretty . . . small change, to buy candy and go to the movies. They "worked" at it, so they told the judge, after school and on Sundays. Now, and for months to come, they're in a Correction "Home." A grim sort of place — gray, gloomy, barren. We know, we went to see them.

The nation knows "Josephine." She made the headlines in all the papers. She is the SEVENTEEN-YEAR-OLD GIRL who was tried recently in Felony Court in New York City on charges of "compulsory prostitution." She organized a group of 12-15-year-old school girls and supplied them to middle aged men on demand. A mite of 85 lbs. Looking more like twelve, than seventeen. Undernourished. Pinched. Utterly bewildered and uncomprehending, as she tugged with dirty fingers, at her shabby slacks and sweater . . . while evidence, irrefutable, convicted her of the nastiest crimes against society. Josephine's home is in one of New York's dankest East Side slums.

**I**N Chicago, Grant's Park, bordering I sedate and aristocratic Michigan Boulevard, has become a rendezvous of death . . . death to young souls. Girls, barely mature enough to realize their sex, are boasting of the soldiers and sailors they had "given fun to." Asked about the Sixth Commandment, they answered that we are at war. And that the only thing they had to give — was themselves — so they did!

Bad as conditions are in New York, Chicago, San Francisco, Los Angeles . . . they are a hundred times worse in small war-boom areas, where thousands of soldiers and sailors have gathered for training . . . where thousands of workers have swarmed into factories and ship-yards. In such towns and cities, delinquency has doubled, tripled and quadrupled. Most of the delinquents are teen-age

girls looking for fun. "Nothing else to do in this town" . . . so they wander down Main Street looking for pick-ups . . . hang around terminal stations, at two, three, and four A.M. . . . sit in the honky-tonks until dawn. Bored, disillusioned, unhappy . . . they're swelling the venereal disease rate, as tragically, as if they were hardened professionals. And their youth is appalling. In a recent clean-up drive in Chicago, all of eighteen girls arrested were under eighteen, and all but two were already infected.

**A**LL these cities and towns are busy about a war. . . to save men's souls and minds from slavery. Assembly lines of a nation's might . . . endlessly, tirelessly forging weapons of victory. But, what kind of a victory, if its youth's souls are corroded

. . . burned because we have no time for them?

Ten years ago we did not have time either. The depression was upon us. We worried about money then. But now, when face to face with war and death . . . surely we can re-value our values. What is more precious than a child? What more important assets has a nation? In the last analysis, is this not a war for our children? That they might be free . . . to live clean, wholesome and holy lives?

Yet behold . . . the rising, mounting tide of Juvenile Delinquency . . . all over our land. It stalks the better neighborhoods, as well, as the slums. It slinks down country lanes . . . jostles crowds in Times Square . . . sits on park benches . . . everywhere. But it is more apparent in sections where poverty, injustice, overcrowding have long made their home. Is it a disease? Or just a symptom? We, who have watched its growth in the Harlem of New York, in the South Side of Chicago . . . know that it is a symptom . . . of a disease. Only . . . the kids aren't sick with it . . . we are. We, the adults of America. We, who have been content for decades to relinquish to School and Church, to Social Agencies and Governmental Agencies . . . the duties of the Home. And who even in the relinquishing, have been so miserly with our funds to them. As if youth — all youth — were not possessions beyond the price of gold or silver.

Trained, deeply concerned Social Workers gather in councils. Teachers hold meetings. Cities call emergency committees together. Upright citizens write long letters to daily papers. Women and men are horrified . . . and ask each other what has happened. The Press screams in headlines: "JUVENILE DELINQUENCY ON THE UPGRADE ALL OVER NATION."

**J**UDGES sit in judgment over the Josephines and Johnnies of our land. White, Black, Protestant, Catholic, Jew . . . Juvenile Delinquency

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**HARLEM FRIENDSHIP HOUSE NEWS**

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**REALISM IN RELIGION**

**C**ONFESSION is good for the soul. We have known it for a long time. Today we want to put it into practice and confess that for a long time we have been rather perturbed, baffled, astonished, bewildered by the strange fact, that, Catholics, who of all people in the world, are most clear and certain of the tenets of their Faith, seem often to lack the ability to face the reality of living in a realistic way, integrated, as all REAL things should be, in that very Religion, they know so well. Yes . . . we confess, that it has puzzled us — much.

Recently we have taken leave from Friendship House — leave of absence — for over three months we have been away. We have gone to see for ourselves, how the people of U.S.A. live and work in the year of grace, 1943. We wanted to know what these "masses" were thinking about, talking about, dreaming and hoping for . . . Someday we might write a book about our findings. Just now, all we want to do, is ask a few questions, from you, from anyone who cares to listen — for we are confused, there is no doubt about that.

**T**AKE Labour. Surely we Catholics have the answer to the tremendous problems facing American labour, world labour, good answers too. Coming to us directly from the Popes, Integrated, as all living should be in God and the Faith. Yet if you were working in a factory, and next to you was an active, intelligent Communist, who spent every free moment distributing well written, up-to-date Party Literature, on every problem that worried workers NOW . . . what would you do? You would want to counter-act it with CATHOLIC LITERATURE . . . Yes, naturally. Now please — name a pamphlet, a magazine, a book, that would be suitable for the workers in that factory. That would be written in their VERNACULAR, simple, concise, up-to-date . . . Just try to find it. We did . . . and found none. Why?

**W**E HAVE THE TRUTH . . . WE HAVE THE ANSWER . . . WE LACK THE REALISM TO BRING OUR RELIGION INTO THE MARKET PLACES. . . .

Juvenile delinquency soars in our land. Teen age youth is running wild. Amongst them are many Catholics, who have received a CATHOLIC EDUCATION, of various degrees — Grammar School, High School. Yet, so many of them have no clear realistic conception of their religion. They know its tenets, almost by heart. Intellectually. Yet they do not INTEGRATE same into their lives. Why?

In an age when all things conspire against morality, movies, magazines, radio, when purity has become "obsolete" — "old fashioned" . . . and even unknown to many, as a virtue, we seem to be afraid to restore it REALISTICALLY on its pedestal. We continue to speak the language of our Victorian fore-fathers, to a youth that leaves the first grade of high school to go to an Assembly Line !!!

**WE HAVE THE TRUTH . . . WE HAVE THE ANSWER . . . WE LACK ONLY THE COURAGE AND REALISM TO BRING LOVE AND PURITY TO THE YOUNG IN THE LANGUAGE OF TODAY . . . AGAINST THE EVILS OF TODAY . . . THAT ARE NOT THOSE OF YESTERDAY. . . .**

**T**HE first Commandment is explicit. We cannot worship idols. We must worship God and Him alone. Yet we are building new idols every day in our hearts. Amongst them a strange one has made its appearance. It seems to take birth in the hearts of modern parents and has done so for quite a long while — the idol of child-worship and possession. In our travels, we enjoyed the hospitality of many a saintly Convent. Visited many holy Monasteries. Everywhere we heard that vocations were falling off. Have been falling off long before the war. The superiors who talked to us, gave us one of the strangest reasons for this phenomenon — we ever heard of. They said parents worshipped children so, that they were reluctant to give them up to God. They wanted to have them around as long as possible. Their hopes for them were — WEALTH, COMFORT, MARRIAGE, SUCCESS! Now this was the most unrealistic attitude possible for CATHOLICS. How did it come into being?

**FOR WE KNOW THE ANSWERS. WE HAVE THE TRUTH . . . DO WE LACK THE COURAGE TO PROCLAIM IT LOUDLY TO THE FOUR WINDS . . . HAVE WE FORGOTTEN THAT GRACE RESTS ON NATURE . . . AND THAT NOTHING IS MORE REALISTICALLY REAL THAN THE CATHOLIC FAITH . . . WHY THEN DON'T WE BRING THIS HOLY REALISM INTO OUR RELIGION . . . INTEGRATING IT COMPLETELY IN OUR DAILY LIVES . . . FOR ALL TO SEE . . . FOR ALL TO LEARN FROM? . . .**

Yes, we confess openly that we are puzzled . . . AND FRIGHTENED TOO.

**CHICAGO HOUSE**

Ann Harrigan

A little spell of hot weather has served to remind us of new things — such as the need of screen doors (we need 4) and the greater need of having a place for open air recreation. We live here between the confines of a narrow, busy, noisy street and the back alley aforementioned. We are going to put up a basketball ring in the alley to utilize every available space, but we will need a field somewhere near to play punch ball, baseball, and other outdoor games. Blessed Martin will get this for us, so we are not too worried, and then George, one of the volunteers, has just changed his job, so he'll be free to direct the boys and girls during the day.

Fr. O'Brien has started the long awaited Liturgy class. That's when it happened. Kate wanted to know if all this training in basic spiritual values weren't leading up to the formation of a religious order. And the answer came, emphatically, No! Being a religious order would no doubt help in many ways, inviting ways, but it would defeat the very purpose of our being lay people, to begin with. *Man as he is today* (outside of a percentage of Catholics) is one of two things — either he doesn't give a damn about religion at all, or he actively hates its representatives. Now we believe we have to approach this modern man *as he is*, NOT as we would like him to be, or as he was approached a hundred years ago. Hence, we almost have to be spies for God. We almost have to hide the fact that we build and

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## STAFF REPORTER

by N. J. G.

**T**HE longer I am in Friendship House the more acutely I realize the need for its infinite multiplication. Something like the loaves and fishes of the Gospels. Few people can see this terrific need . . . until they cross the unseen divide and come to taste its fullness, by sharing the lives of the poor.

Did you know that there is a strange joy, a great satisfaction in doing so . . . completely? Perhaps it is because Christ did it. Identifying Himself utterly with His beloved poor. It is good too because it strips you of so much that is unnecessary. Makes you realize that first things DO come first. And what are these FIRST THINGS? Surely to love God with all your heart, and to prove that love to Him, by loving your neighbor. The poor know this instinctively. And when yours is the privilege of sharing their lives . . . they teach you this . . . naturally, simply, as they do most things.

But there are also those among the poor who need your help . . . who need Christ — so badly. And to these . . . such a realistic form of Catholic Action as Friendship House . . . is an answer to prayers wrung from hearts full of anguish. South Side Chicago . . . Harlem, New York . . . only two of thousands of Negro and White sections rotting from the same diseases . . . hunger, over-crowding, dirty tenements, filthy streets . . . sin.

For such people, Christ said to us: "Leave Father and Mother, sister and brother and follow Me." And more and more are heeding His call. Take last week, for example. A man came in from New Jersey to see Friendship House. Christ has called him to go and live WITH His poor, and quite naturally, he wanted to see how we have lived up to Our Lord's example and words. And only a few days before, another man was in, to talk over his idea of a Catholic information center. Negroes, Whites pass by, day and night, a certain busy corner in a crowded city on Long Island. God opened this man's heart, to a crying need . . . and lo, blossoming on a shabby street, will be another oasis in a desert of shops, poolrooms, saloons, juke joints.

"What makes you click" . . . each wanted to know. Well, what does? Back we go to the fundamental principles of Interracial Catholic Action . . . working WITH, not FOR the Negro . . . seeing Christ in EVERY-ONE . . . no matter how hidden He

is behind sin, or dirt . . . or even wealth. BEING poor ourselves . . . not just helping others, who are poor. Trying to do everything as we believe Christ would have done it . . . in the same spirit of charity . . . love . . . patience . . . humility . . . joy. Giving all away . . . and keeping nothing for ourselves. Living by Faith . . . without questioning the future . . . knowing it is HIS, and that is all that matters. Living for Him, by Him. Knowing that ours is only the plowing . . . His, the harvest . . . and WANTING it that way.

Eddie Fitzgerald is back from England for O.C.S. training. Eddie graduated from Fordham Law School just before he enlisted in the Army. One of the grandest guys who ever lived . . . and were the kids crazy about him! He thought the English Tommies were swell, but fell like a ton of bricks for the Irish lads. As Irish himself as a shamrock — it was mutual admiration! Good to see him again. Which reminds me that we can boast of 45 of our CYO, Negro boys now in the Armed Forces. You answered our appeal for adoption like the friends you are . . . but there are still a few boys left, who would appreciate so much . . . the letters, cookies, magazines you might send them. Please write for a name . . . if you possibly can. The boys are most enthusiastic . . . and most grateful.

## MARTIN de Porres



## THE BARONESS JOTS IT DOWN

**I**T is nice to come home, to Friendship House, Harlem, after a long journey. Always, when I return, a feeling of happiness comes over me. For after all, this is the cradle of the work, the place I started, five and a half years ago, serving Christ in the Negro.

It is fun to have kids on the street yell — "Hello, Miss Baroness." To greet the old shoe-shine man, half asleep at the corner. To pass the time of the day with the women, who stroll leisurely on Lenox Avenue in search of food bargains. To inquire how the barber, who came into the Church, is getting along, and find out who is going with whom in the teen-age group. The progress from my apartment on 138th Street, to the Library on 135th, is slow . . . but what of it. It is fun. For there are so many friends to talk to. Yes, Harlem is home to me. And I guess always will be. My first love.

**N**ANCY GRENELL, the new head of Friendship House, Harlem, is a wonderful young lady. You knew, of course, that ever since we have started the Chicago branch, the whole Friendship House movement, has taken on a new and vigorous lease on life, with many new activities and ramifications. I have to travel so much more between the two. Lecture more. Write more. Make all kinds of pertinent surveys . . . that it became imperative to select someone else to run the Friendship House proper in Harlem. Attend to the thousand details. Answer the letters . . . did you know we get sixteen thousand letters a year?

So, Nancy was selected. She comes to us from California. She is petite, blonde and very charming. She left an executive job in an advertising office to come to us. Full of all kinds of talents, she is an executive par excellence, and under her able management the place runs smoothly, with narry a crack.

She works hard. Yet seldom looks tired. Up early — late to bed. Yet always a smile . . . how does she do it? Very simply. She talks much to the Lord, and lets Him do most of it. If you ever will meet Ann of Chicago and Nancy of Harlem, you will suddenly think that they look alike . . . they don't. But both have the same look of inner peace — His peace . . . and both reflect the shadow of His Face . . . for both are in love with Him. Come and see for yourself sometime.

## ON SCANDALIZING

(Continued from Page 1)

draws no color line . . . makes no geographical . . . religious discrimination. Greedily it sucks all in. But who is judging whom? We, our children . . . or our children, us???

Do you feel like shying away from the picture of Josephine? Is she a "monster" in your eyes? Well, if she is WE created that "monster" . . . and when we think of her and the thousands like her, we should say "Mea Culpa" and beg Christ's forgiveness . . . that we have failed so badly, as Americans . . . as Christians . . . as human beings. For WE failed these kids . . . criminally . . . selfishly . . . cruelly . . . just as Judas failed Christ. For we betrayed their youth . . . their hopes . . . their innocence.

Let's face it . . . honestly and squarely. Now that the home, which we were so careless in preserving yesterday, is being broken up by the relentless god of War, what can we do? First, we can face ourselves . . . and admit that adolescent delinquency is the result of adult delinquency . . . long accepted by our decadent society quite complacently, as part of BEING MODERN. Let us stop this. Let us bring God back into our hearts and souls, God and His Ten Commandments. Let us begin with ourselves . . . but not stop there. As Catholics we can't . . . for we are *always* our brother's keeper. Let us then open our hearts and purses wide. Help those who work with adolescents and pre-adolescents. Build more camps, more nurseries, more schools. But give more than money . . . give ourselves . . . to the finest, most glamorous task in the world, though it wears no glamor-uniform to bolster it up. The task of keeping whole the hearts, the minds, the souls and bodies of our precious heritage . . . OUR CHILDREN.

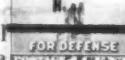
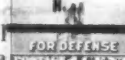
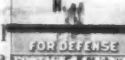
LET us do it today, for the sins of this generation are crying loudly to God for vengeance. Let us clean up our minds and hearts and souls. Let us clean up our radios and movies, too, by taking them out of the hands of profiteers. Let us clean up advertising, which so often glorifies merely the cheapest, rankest standards of conduct. Let us give our children something genuine to admire, instead of the shoddy emotions and tinsel values they feast on today. And let us do it NOW — while our make-

believe-world is crumbling away, under the impact of War and Death. Let us show our children that the world is not the miserable place they are finding it . . . That there is rest and peace and joy for their unhappy hearts in the simple, Eternal truths of God.

The first time Josephine stood up in Magistrate court, she kept smiling and fondling a gold bracelet. With her earnings she had bought that trinket. Could it not be that — before God — *all of us* might have a lot to answer . . . for that bracelet?

## CHICAGO HOUSE

(Continued from Page 2)

ever  ot ourselves more deeply  e of Christ in God — that  e have him interested and curious and wanting to know more. That is why we must, IN SO FAR AS POSSIBLE, look and act like the people around us. Living with them, meeting them every day with their big and little problems makes us better able to talk to them, not only about their troubles, but about Christ. We are here. We are on the scene. And no amount of textbooks can take the place of this.

Father Haley dropped in from Milwaukee and from his various labors for a chat. I said to him: "Father, will you pray that we get lots of grace to do the work God wants us to do here?" His answer was a real pepper-upper — "You already get all the extra grace you need, because God knows it is necessary for your state in life!"

Recently, we walked into the Keatings for a Sunday evening bull session and smorgasbord — and who should be there but Fr. Wendell and the Baroness! I bet you can't guess what we talked about. By the time we broke up everybody said they learned more about Catholic Action that afternoon, then they did at the convention on CA they had attended

the week previous.

This is the month of May — and this we are trying to make it. Mildred got a brainstorm as a result of trying to think of a plan that would teach the kids something about Our Lady. First of all we want them to know that there is such a wonderful person as Our Lady . . . and then, who she is. All the councilors of the Casita — that means Marcella, Lillian, Mary Ellen, Sylvia, Bernice, Kate, Bill, Marge — are working on this. And as the culmination, we will have a procession and crowning of the Virgin; and we're inviting the Bishop. Don't you love the casual way we put it about the Bishop? You'd never think, he is so hard to get, and busy, that we just about give up sometimes . . . but then he pops up . . . and I figure if I am just off-hand about it, so will the Lord be.

Last week the Baroness came in and took over our usual Saturday night round table with a talk on the phases of Catholic Action now in existence, and what'll have to be done to these and to form new ones, if the new social order is to be stamped with anything Christian. The crowd went wild for more and more, and I finally had to call a halt, out of pity for the Baroness who has a terrible case of bronchitis . . . but would she admit she was tired? We served coffee at this point. It's funny how we always seem to have some on hand. People come in and give us a pound every so often and that's the way we seem to get along. But I must admit that we serve tea often enough, too. And for both of these we are grateful to our benefactors one and all. We owe so much . . . we really don't know where to begin to thank them for the seemingly never ending stream of gifts they bring or send us for the children's center or here. But we do still need — a sun lamp, lumber, flashlights, games, supplies, two short ladders for the library, etc. How about it, friends?

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